

Pend Oreille County profile



2016

by Doug Tweedy, regional labor economist - *updated September*

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Overview

Regional context

Pend Oreille County is in the northeast corner of Washington. The county is bound by Canada to its north and Idaho to its east. Most of the county is dominated by the rugged, mountainous Colville National Forest. The southern part of the county has forested foothills as well as drier hills and valleys. The Pend Oreille River runs the length of the county, providing electric power and recreation for the area.

Land policies influence economic development in Pend Oreille County, especially changes regarding timber land management and mining. Only 36 percent of land in the county is privately owned, and about 58 percent is owned by the federal government. There is also a Kalispel reservation in Usk in central Pend Oreille.

Pend Oreille County is unique in terms of population density, transportation, industries and infrastructure. It is very rural with only 9.3 persons per square mile and has a rural economy, with limited transportation routes and dependence on resource extraction, specifically, lead and zinc mining followed by timber and cement manufacturing. These realities greatly affect job growth and job creation.

Local economy

Pend Oreille County was largely settled after the discovery of gold in the 1850s in the northern part of the county. This gold strike failed to become a major gold rush. The real mining riches were found in other hard-rock minerals: lead and zinc.

Timber became a major industry once railroad access was developed. A cement manufacturing industry also developed, benefiting from natural deposits of limestone and quartz in the northern part of the county. Much of this resource extraction was first made possible by using the Pend Oreille River for transportation, then by railroad and eventually by state highways.

Two major employment sectors in Pend Oreille County are manufacturing and government. Government employment accounts for more than 50 percent of all jobs and continues to face budget reductions in 2016/2017. Manufacturing employment remains weak due to improved technology and efficiencies allowing manufactures to increase production without an increase in employment.

Geographic facts

(Source: *U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*)

	Pend Oreille County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	1,399.99	25
Persons per square mile, 2010	9.3	33

Outlook

The employment in Pend Oreille County was affected by the most recent recession, beginning in 2008. The recovery has been long, slow and painful. Growth over the last several years has dropped off, with small pockets of gains, but nowhere near the amount needed to replace the total employment at the peak of the business cycle.

Even with a slow rate of growth, the workforce serving Pend Oreille's major industries presents challenges because current workers have a high average age, increasing the need for replacement workers as they begin retiring.

Labor force and unemployment

(Source: Employment Security Department)

The civilian labor force increased slightly in the first six months of 2016 to 4,737, from the same period in 2015 of 4,646. The number of employed residents showed an increase in 2016 to 4,276 (99).

The average unemployment rate in the first half of 2016 was 9.7 percent, down from 10.1 percent in 2015. The county continues to have one of the highest unemployment rates in the state. But things are improving as the drop in the unemployment rate was due to an increase in jobs.

Industry employment

(Source: Employment Security Department)

Pend Oreille County is a rural labor market with 2,959 jobs located in the county in 2015. Consequently, a large number (about a third) of the employed residents work in jobs at firms located outside the county. It is likely that the suburban expansion of Spokane into Pend Oreille County explains part of this, but it also reflects a higher level of commuting by residents for jobs outside the county.

- Goods-producing employment averaged 413 jobs in 2015, increasing slightly from the same period in 2014.
- Service-providing employment averaged 2,597 jobs in 2015, increasing 146 jobs from 2014.

Industry employment by age and gender

(Source: The Local Employment Dynamics)

The Local Employment Dynamics (LED) database, a joint project of state employment departments and the U.S. Census Bureau, matches state employment data with federal administrative data. Among the products is industry employment by age and gender. All workers covered by state unemployment insurance data are included; federal workers and non-covered workers, such as the self-employed, are not. Data are presented by place of work, not place of residence. Some highlights:

The largest jobholder age group in Pend Oreille County in 2015 was the 45 to 54 year-olds at 25.1 percent of the workforce. This percentage was closely followed by jobholders aged 55 to 64 with 23.0 percent of the workforce.

In 2015, men held 50.8 percent and women held 49.2 percent of the jobs in Pend Oreille County. There were substantial differences in gender dominance by industry.

- Male-dominated industries included agriculture (87.9 percent), manufacturing (88.3 percent), construction (85.3 percent) and mining (89.0 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included healthcare and social assistance (81.1 percent), finance and insurance (79.2 percent) and educational services (70.7 percent).

Wages and income

(Source: Employment Security Department; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey)

In 2015, there were 2,960 jobs covered by unemployment insurance in Pend Oreille County, with a total payroll of \$133.7 million.

The 2015 average annual wage was \$45,175, well below the state's average annual wage of \$56,642. Pend Oreille was 9th in the state in 2015 in average annual wage.

Personal income

Personal income includes earned income, investment income, and government payments such as Social Security and Veterans Benefits. Investment income includes income imputed from pension funds and from owning a home. Per capita personal income equals total personal income divided by the resident population.

In 2014, the per capita personal income was \$33,530, less than the state (\$49,610) and the nation (\$46,049).

According to the U.S. Census QuickFacts, the median household income was \$40,070 in 2010-2014. The county's median income was less than that of the state (\$60,294).

In 2010 through 2014, 22.3 percent of the county population was living below the poverty level, much higher than the state (12.2 percent).

Population

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

Pend Oreille County's population was 13,088 in 2015. From 2010 to 2015, the population increased at a rate of 0.7 percent compared to the state's growth rate of 6.6 percent.

The largest city in Pend Oreille County is Newport, with a population of 2,160 in 2015.

Population facts

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

	Pend Oreille County	Washington state
Population 2015	13,088	7,170,351
Population 2010	13,001	6,724,543
Percent change, 2010 to 2015	0.7%	6.6%

Age, gender and ethnicity

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

Pend Oreille County had an older population than the state reported in 2015.

- Pend Oreille County's population of those aged 65 and older was 23.8 percent compared to the state's 14.4 percent.
- The population under 18 years old was 19.9 percent in the county, less than that of the state's 22.5 percent.
- Females in 2015 made up 48.8 percent of the county's population compared to 50.0 percent of the state.

Pend Oreille County showed much less diversity in 2015 than the state in all racial/ethnic categories except American Indians and Alaskan Natives. In Pend Oreille, American Indians and Alaskan Natives made up 4.0 percent of its population compared to 1.9 percent of the state's population.

Demographics

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

	Pend Oreille County	Washington state
Population by age, 2015		
Under 5 years old	4.4%	6.2%
Under 18 years old	19.9%	22.5%
65 years and older	23.8%	14.4%
Females, 2015	48.8%	50.0%
Race/ethnicity, 2015		
White	91.3%	80.3%
Black	0.7%	4.1%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	4.0%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	0.9%	9.1%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	3.7%	12.4%

Educational attainment

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

Most of Pend Oreille County residents age 25 and older (90.3 percent) were high school graduates, which compares with 90.2 percent of Washington state's residents.

Those with a bachelor's degree or higher made up 16.6 percent of Pend Oreille County residents age 25 and older compared to 32.3 percent of state residents.